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DHARMENDRA: 8 DECEMBER 1935 — 24 NOVEMBER 2025

A LIFE LIVED KING-SIZE

NAMRATA JOSHI @ Mumbai

DHARMENDRA made a soft landing in Hindi cinema singing Mukesh's "*Mujhko is raat ki tanhai mein awaaz na do*" in Arjun Hingorani's *Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere* (1960), a sad, star-crossed love story about the poor and disempowered in Mumbai, who are unable to rise above their circumstances.

The film also showcased a facet of Dharmendra's personality that he came to be identified with for the rest of his life—his unquestionable handsomeness. The audience could not take its eyes off the chaste good looks and trim body he sported as a young street salesman-turned-boxer. A few years down the line, the screen caught fire, metaphorically, in O P Ralhan's *Phool Aur Patthar* (1966) when Garam-Dharam, as he later came to be called, loomed over a sleeping Meena Kumari and took his shirt off to thoughtfully shield her from the cold.

At a time when fitness was not quite the characteristic of a Hindi film hero, Dharmendra rang in a new paradigm of robustness. A legacy carried forward by the likes of Vinod Khanna and Salman Khan, and practically every single contemporary male star. However, there has been a significant difference: Dharmendra's was not about sculpted, gym-toned, six-pack abs but a rugged, healthy male ideal. His masculinity before getting taken over by the action and stunts and loudness in the 80s was also underlined with a quiet tenderness, overwhelming romance and playful humour.

Dharmendra remained impervious to the superstardom of his contemporaries, Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan, but didn't get celebrated as much for his own. Despite the diversity of roles in over 300 films and 65 years in the film industry, dotted with innumerable hits, being the He-Man ended up defining Dharmendra and confining him as well.

But for every action entertainer like Raj Khosla's *Mera Gaon Mera Desh* (1971), and Nasir Hussain's *Yaadon Ki Baaraat* (1973), there was Hrishikesh Mukherjee's hilarious *Chupke Chupke*, and the same filmmaker's poignant *Satyakam*. And of course, there was Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay*.

Through the 80s, 90s and 2000s, his career began sliding, and his own children and nephew—Sunny, Bobby, Esha and Abhay Deol—took to showbiz. He later retired to his farmhouse in Lonavala.

It took Sriram Raghavan to celebrate the Garam-Dharam magic in *Johnny Gaddar* (2007). And, ironically, it's Raghavan's *Ikkis*, a few weeks away from release, that'd perhaps be his last, and posthumous, performance. From a martyr in *Haqeeqat* to the father of one in the Raghavan film, hopefully, it would be the fitting finale for the multi-layered person and actor Dharmendra was.

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He was iconic, a phenomenal actor who brought charm and depth to every role. The manner in which he played diverse roles struck a chord with people

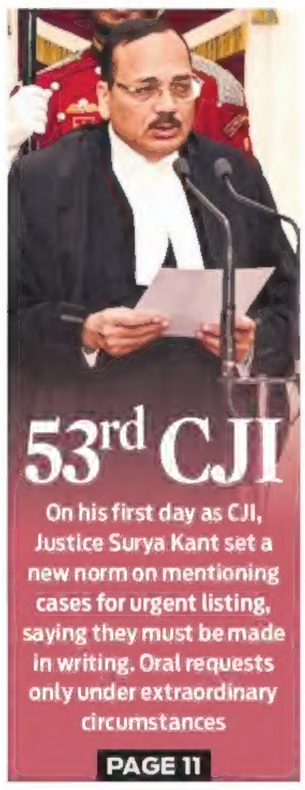
— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

He never forgot his roots. He was a man of the earth and he remained very close to his real self... I didn't see any change in him with stardom and popularity

— Sharmila Tagore, actor

Farewell, my friend. I will always remember your golden heart and the moments we shared. Rest in peace, Dharam ji

— Rajinikanth, actor



53rd CJI

On his first day as CJI, Justice Surya Kant set a new norm on mentioning cases for urgent listing, saying they must be made in writing. Oral requests only under extraordinary circumstances

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Halt ops, give us 3-mth window: Maoists to govt

Letter to CMs of MP, Maha and Chhattisgarh seeks time for collective call on surrender

EJAZ KAISER @ Raipur

THE Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh (MMC) Special Zonal Committee of the banned CPI (Maoist) has sought time until February 15, 2026, to arrive at a collective decision on surrendering arms and accepting the government's rehabilitation package.

The MMC committee operates in the dense tri-junction forest region of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh — a strategically vital corridor used by Maoist cadres to move between different areas of the Dandakaranya Special Zone.

In a signed press release issued in the name of Anant, spokesperson of the MMC Special Zonal Committee, the outfit addressed Chief Ministers of the three states — Devendra Fadnavis (Maharashtra), Vishnu Deo Sai (Chhattisgarh) and Mohan Yadav (Madhya Pradesh) — requesting a halt to anti-Maoist operations.

The letter released to the media claimed that the proposal has the approval of Politburo member Sonu Dada and Central Committee members Satish and Chandranna, all of whom have reportedly renounced armed struggle and surrendered.

Acknowledging the lack of secure and rapid communication channels within the underground network, the statement said: "Since we do not have a fast mechanism to contact one another, the requested period till February 15, 2026, is required. This is well within the March 31, 2026, deadline set by the government."

Reacting to the development, Bastar Range Inspector General of Police P Sundarraj said, "The remaining Maoist cadres and their depleted leadership now have no option except to shun violence and join the social mainstream. Such a press note has emerged when the organisation has crumbled... They are now leaderless, directionless and demoralised. As per directives of governments and desire of the native population, troops are committed to bring an end to the left-wing extremism as early as possible."

Request to convey message on radio

Maoist leader Anant requested that his message be run on radio to ensure it reaches cadres soon. "Allow us to meet representatives and journalists, so that we can declare a date on laying down arms," he said

When *Sholay* came to hills of Ramanagara

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

"KOI haseena jab rooth jaati hai toh, aur namkeen ho jaati hai..." Veeru (legendary actor late Dharmendra) romanced his lady love Basanti (Hema Malini) on Dhanno's tonga on the muddy jungle roads leading to Ramadevara Betta, a revered shrine around 50km from Bengaluru, more than half a century ago in Bollywood's magnum opus *Sholay*.

The jingle of the embellished Dhanno's hooves as she cantered alongside the village kere (pond), since dried, the chase of horses on the makedo roads and hills on which Veeru and Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) immortalised their legendary friendship and valour against a soulless Gabbar Singh iconised by Amjad Khan, are archived in the silence of the bettas (hills) that are also home to the few remaining vultures in their lone sanctuary in India.

Farmers Dharmaiyya (L) and Bettaiah (R) of Ramanagara, around 50km from Bengaluru, point to Ramadevara Betta, fondly recalling the days when the *Sholay* team arrived there more than 50 years ago | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

The lone road leading to the makeshift Sippy Nagar, famous as Ramgarh on the silver screen, was tarred to help pilgrims, tourists and now inmates of Ramgiri Colony which was borne out of the village created by Ramesh Sippy. As the sun sets behind the giant granite hills surrounding the village, one can still hear horses' hooves running up the incline where Gabbar teased Thakur (Sanjeev Kumar) after tying him to a pole with his bone-chilling one-liner, "*Ye haath mujhey de de, Thakur*," (give me your hands, Thakur) and later, Veeru abusing Gabbar in what became Dharmendra's signature dialogue for villains, "*Kutte... kaminey*!"

Bettaiah, a farmer, recalled how he used to wait for the Sholay team to arrive in the desolate wilderness of Ramanagara more than 50 years ago, when he was all of 15. "They created the village, Thakur's haveli, Shiva temple, masjid... None of us would cook those days. Food would come from the makeshift canteen that they had built here," he pointed out the spot. P12

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India went from 95/1 to 105/5, losing four wickets for ten runs. This is the worst collapse for these wickets for India at home since 1984

JANSEN-SATIONAL SPELL

Marco Jansen (C) took six wickets to help South Africa gain a massive 288-run lead against India in the 2nd and final Test | PTI | P17

Amid protest, govt junks plan for int'l flower market at GKVK

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

AMIDST opposition to the International Flower Market inside the Horticulture Research Centre at Gandhi Krishi Vignana Kendra (GKVK) Campus, Bengaluru, and demand for 10 acres instead of five, the government is looking for suitable land elsewhere in the region to house the project. The proposed project involved axing of about 900 trees on the GKVK campus, which had drawn opposition from green activists.

M Vishwanath, Managing Director, of the International Flower Auction Board, said that in a meeting convened by Secretary of the Horticulture Department, Shamla Iqbal, on November 12 various stakeholders came together to request Yelahanka tahsildar to look for land which is close to the main road.

The stakeholders said the project had drawn strong criticism as it involved felling of nearly 900 trees and would lead to possible traffic on Sandeep Unnikrishnan Road in Yelahanka and Vidyaranya Pura, and would mount pressure on the International Airport Road. Based on their inputs, it was decided to look for an alternate land. P2

EXPRESS READ

LEADERSHIP TUSSLE

CM: Will obey high command decision

Chikkaballapur: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said he will continue in the top post if the Congress high command directs him to do so. To a question on sharing the CM's post with DCM DK Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah said he and Shivakumar have to obey the instructions of the top leadership | P4

DARMASTHALA CASE

Court grants bail to complainant

Mangaluru: A Mangaluru court on Monday granted bail to the 45-year-old witness complainant in the alleged Dharmasthala mass burial case, who is currently lodged in Shivamogga prison. He has to execute a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh with two sureties | P4

HARASSMENT

India raps China on Arunachal

New Delhi: India launched a sharp diplomatic protest against China after an Arunachal Pradesh woman was detained and harassed for nearly 18 hours at the Shanghai Airport when Chinese immigration officials refused to recognise her Indian passport. A strong demarche was issued in Beijing and Delhi | P11

Level up: PMO to babus on cabinet notes

SUMIT KUMAR SINGH @ New Delhi

IN a sharp message to the bureaucracy, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has ordered all ministries to stop working in silos, drop blame games and prepare only "high quality" cabinet notes that match Indian policies and projects with global standards.

The strongly worded directive, issued last week, asks secretaries to shed "routine bureaucratic mindset" and focus on "value addition" while drafting or commenting on cabinet notes — proposals which ministers submit before the government for approval on major policy decisions.

The PMO made it clear that these instructions reflect Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal views and must be strictly followed by all.

"Finalisation of cabinet notes should be monitored regularly to avoid delays. Ministries must focus on value addition rather than routine comments," the note reads. It emphasises early inter-ministerial consultations and, if required, face-to-face meetings to iron out differences instead of letting files gather dust in endless back-and-forth.

The PMO said: "Proposals submitted to Cabinet Committees relating to various projects/schemes/programmes and policies should, wherever possible, incorporate details of benchmarking with global standards with respect to that proposal."

The PMO also warned against the tendency to push files with narrow departmental views, and to keep in mind the overall public interest while conceptualising a policy proposal. "Departments should not focus only on their limited turf but look at the larger national perspective," it stated, especially in multi-ministry schemes. To ensure speed and quality, the finalisation of every cabinet note will now be tracked closely. Ministries have been told to incorporate global benchmarking wherever possible so that India's policies match the best in the world.

REPORT SOON

Survey of 200 GPs reveals people missing out on govt benefits

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

IN a shocking revelation, a sample survey conducted by the state government across 200 gram panchayats found that many people are living without access to any government schemes.

The survey revealed that though these people are poor, they do not have basic documents, like below poverty line (BPL) cards, income certificates, caste certificates or even Aadhaar cards. Without these documents, they have been deprived of many government programmes, including the guarantee schemes. The survey report will be ready soon.

The survey was conducted over three months by the Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Department. Official sources from the department said they selected vulnerable households and found that many do not have the basic documents required. "They do not have caste certificates, though they belong to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes. Because of this, they are deprived of many benefits provided by the government. The same is true of income certificates, which they do not have despite living in extreme poverty. We also found that some do not have Aadhaar cards or even voter ID cards. None of the government schemes are reaching them," said the sources.

The department chose 10 backward districts, including Vijayapura, Koppal, Raichur, Kalaburagi, Bagalkot, Bidar, Yadgir and Chama-rajanagar.

"We selected two backward taluks in each of these districts and ten backward gram panchayats in each taluk. A total of 200 gram panchayats were chosen for the survey, covering about 1,046 villages," Manoj Kumar Meena, Secretary to the Department, told *The New Indian Express*. P7

Bulk of household spending goes to durables: Study

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

THE consumption pattern of Indian households has changed dramatically over the past decade with the share of monthly per capita expenditure on food falling below 50% for the first time and a larger portion going to non-food items such as durable goods, a new study reveals.

According to the study, which compares data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Surveys of 2011-12 and 2023-24, household spending is shifting from basic necessities to asset-building items such as domestic appliances.

The findings are part of a working paper released by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. The paper says the gap in asset ownership between the bottom 40% (B40) and the top 20% (T20) of households is narrowing.

Mobile phones have emerged as the primary medium for information, entertainment and communication, with near-universal ownership across both urban and rural areas and all consumption groups. Among B40 rural households, mobile phone ownership rose from 66.5% in 2011-12 to 94.3% in 2023-24, it noted.

Television ownership in rural areas, too, increased from 49.6% recorded in the 2011-12 survey to 61.1% in 2023-24.

Interestingly, in urban areas, television ownership declined from 80.4% to 78.5%, a trend the study attributes to mobile phones replacing TV screens.

Refrigerator ownership among both rural and urban households tripled. Ownership of air conditioners/air coolers and washing machines also rose across rural and urban areas, including B40 households.

HOCKEY GIVES HOPE FOR A NEW BEGINNING

Amir Ali, whose father is a roadside mechanic, would be seeking a better life with a commendable show at Jr Hockey World Cup | P17